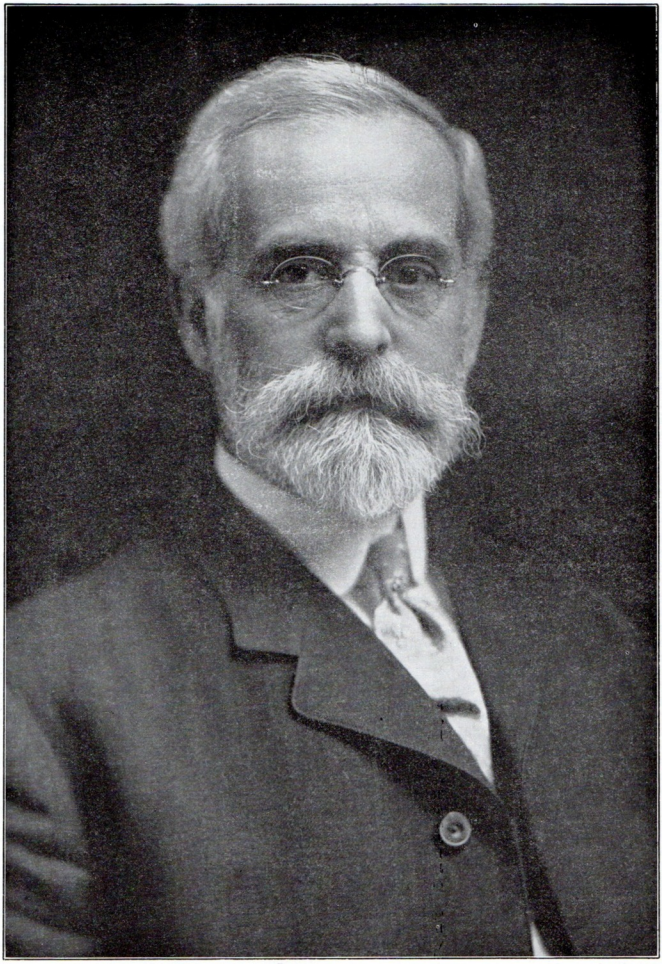
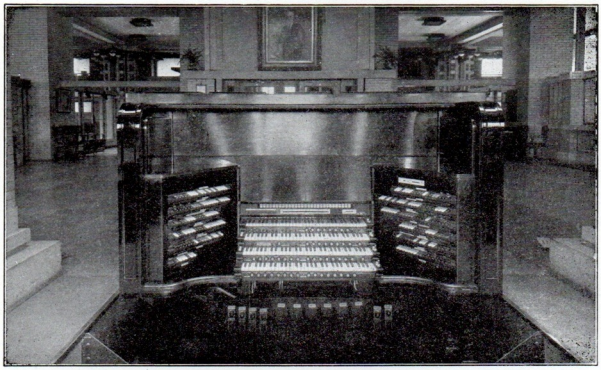


THE LATE JOHN D. LARKIN

(Beach photo)

Founder and President for fifty years of Larkin Co., and donor of the new pipe-organ installed at the plant. A bequest of $110,000 for this specific purpose was made by him.



MANUAL OF THE NEW LARKIN ORGAN

Where Culture and Commerce Meet

By FRANCIS BURNET FRAZEE

THE morning before Christmas, 1925, will always dwell in my memory. It was the morning when the great Larkin organ, partially installed, was first played. I am so glad that the founder of the Larkin Company heard at least in some measure the rich, beautiful tones of the magnificent organ which was his golden anniversary gift to the great family of Larkin Company workers, a gift which proved to be his farewell remembrance to those men and women with whom he had surrounded himself over the years.

I shall remember that morning before Christmas because of an incident which occurred. As the beautiful Christmas melodies filled the great sunlit court of the Administration Building, we all listened with rapt attention moved by that deepest of emotions which music had stirred within us. William J. Gomph, Buffalo organist, was at the console.

Even though the vast organ of many thousand pipes was as yet incomplete, we gained some conception at least of all the wealth of music that lay in store for us, for Mr. Gomph's program ranged from soft, flute-like Christmas melodies, familiar Christmas hymns, to the richest tones of the oratorio.

And the incident! Passing down the court I met Mr. Larkin just outside the entrance to his private office. He was standing there listening with the rest of us to the music that swelled up through the great five-floor well of the open court to the very ceiling. Mr. Larkin was always a man of great calm, but his eyes always told the story of his pleasure and delight; and one had but to glance at his face to know how happy he was!

I spoke to him of the organ and all that it stood for to those who were to hear it daily. I added that to my mind music was ever a symbol of harmony.

I shall never forget his reply. "Isn't it beautiful," said he, "that we may all enjoy it together! I hope that the day may come when it may be amplified throughout the entire plant so that the men at work in the warehouse and power house and all through all of our buildings may enjoy it with us!"

I have thought about that comment many times since then. Mr. Larkin's sense of his business had been ever of one all-extensive family of employees. While the passing years had built a plant that covered many acres with buildings, his institution ever remained with him a great human unit. And now, while thousands in the Administration Building were enjoying the Christmas program, his mind reached out to those within the family of employees who were as yet missing the uplift of the Christmas music.

John D. Larkin in the fulness of eighty-one years passed from us, February 15, 1926, some six weeks after the day on which this little conversation which I have narrated took place. It was almost my last talk with him, and I think I shall always think of it first when I think of him. It was so completely characteristic of the founder of Larkin Company.

THE LARKIN ORGAN IN PERSPECTIVE

At the far end of the light shaft, the pipes may be seen; in the extreme lower right, the keyboard.

Musical instruments have been installed before in great business institutions, in vast retail establishments; but Mr. Larkin was among the pioneers in erecting in a great office building for the benefit of those who daily worked therein, a wonderful organ—an organ which is the largest in Western New York, and which represented an outlay of over one hundred thousand dollars.

Even though this organ has been ours but a year, it is not too early to reckon its influence on us all. One cannot hear it played, as it frequently is during the day, without gratitude for all it brings to upbuild and feed the cultural side of our lives. Surely where music is sweet, concord reigns, and one goes about the daily task with that happy, cheery outlook, that free and buoyant spirit which is a guarantee of work well performed.

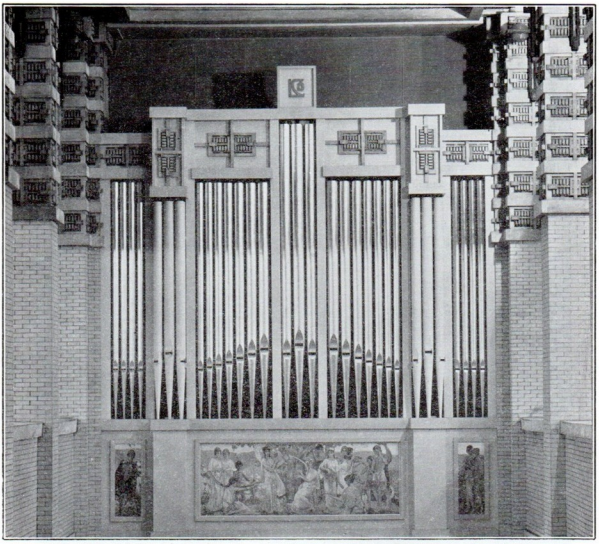
"How often is it played?" eager visitors ask. One might answer with a query: "How often is the piano in your own home touched?" The answer in either instance would be, "When our musicians are in the mood."

Larkin Company is fortunate in having a number of men within its own organization who are themselves organists. They not only play for their own joy and satisfaction, but they play for the pleasure and upon the request of others in the Larkin family of two thousand members who want to hear some particular selection.

And then we have had visitors: some great organists both from afar and from our own talent here in Buffalo. The organist who plays Mr. P. S. du Pont's private organ, a great Belgian organist, Mr. Firmin Swinnen, held us enraptured with a wonderful concert at a recital by special invitation. By special invitation an audience of several hundred, including Buffalo music lovers and critics, listened to this recital of Mr. Swinnen's. Not only did it afford many in Buffalo the opportunity to listen to a world-renowned organist, but at the same time justified the high expectations of everyone in the superb tonal qualities of the Larkin organ.

Since then, Fridays at noon, leading organists of Buffalo, including such men as DeWitt Garretson, Harry W. Stratton, Leonard Adams, Edward Hardy, and other notable musicians, have furnished a series of recitals which have brought within the great Larkin Administration Building a wealth of beautiful music.

Splendid as these concerts have been, it is the informal music played at all hours by organists within the Larkin organization that has made the organ an intimate, close, personal possession of the Larkin employees. Just as the piano within the home is there to be played when the mood moves one, so has the organ become a part of the family life at Larkin Company.



THE PIPES AT CLOSE RANGE

Beneath the pipes may be seen the beautiful mural painting, "The Spirit of Music." The mural and design of the face of the organ are by Alexander O. Levy.

And how our own organists love to play an instrument with its possibilities for ranging from the low and soft music that might come from elfland to the great symphonies which the power of this great organ demonstrates.

The organ itself is built-in on the fourth and fifth floors of the building. The view of the great Administration Court accompanying this article, shows the organ itself with a mural done by Alex O. Levy, symbolizing the music, hung directly below. The manual stands in the court of the Administration Building. It is a fitting thing that one looking at the manual sees hung in the court a painting of the donor himself, Mr. John D. Larkin, founder and for fifty years president of the Larkin Company.

The Larkin concert organ is one of the largest in the country. It far exceeds in size any organ in Western New York. Conceive, if you will, an organ of 6691 pipes, of 184 stop keys; an organ accompanied with the latest development in automatic playing devices. Since its erection there has been added to the organ a concert grand Chickering Ampico player piano, playing separately or from the organ console. This piano is located in the center of the court. In thus bringing to Larkin Company an instrument in which the finest organists in America have taken a genuine delight, Mr. John D. Larkin left to us all a beneficent influence that will make nearer and dearer and richer and fuller the family life which we all live in this great humane organization.

But he has done infinitely more than this! He has blended, as was always his desire, the cultural with the commercial. He provided for our daily work-a-day lives, an inspirational element out of which the spirit of an organization may rise to things which transcend the merely commercial.

Does this mark a new era in the life of a great business organization? Does it set an example of bringing into the humdrum day the finer things of the spirit? Surely at least tomorrow must mean in every organization a greater cultural life! Great businesses blessed with such influences necessarily must attract to them those whose thoughts look out on life as a thing to be *lived* not merely experienced.

Every passing day makes the Larkin organ a more prized possession of Larkin men and women. And its immediate influence is not limited by any means to the Larkin organization. The influence of this organ was far-reaching in the great family Christmas party of the Larkin employees. The mothers, the wives, and the children gathered to hear it played. During the afternoon and evening over eight thousand attended the Larkin Christmas party. Thus is its influence being spread throughout our city.